

State of Connecticut

GENERAL ASSEMBLY



COMMISSION ON CHILDREN

Senator Geratana, Representative Urban and members of the Committee,

My name is Elaine Zimmerman. I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Commission on Children and am here today to speak on behalf of RB 6430, An Act Concerning Children and the Recession.

Last year our state made national history with specific attention to the impact of this economic downturn on children. We were the first state in the country to carefully study the impact of the recession on children and learned that 35,000 children would fall into poverty in our state, costing approximately eight hundred million per year in lost wages and health costs. We also learned that children who fell into the rabbit hole of poverty during a recession did not come out after the economy recovered. In fact their poverty continues into adulthood.

We looked at all possible measures to cover the rabbit hole, buffer the impact, and to support families in this rough time. The Children and Recession bill is now being replicated in other states. It was lauded at the National Conference of State Legislatures and Representative Urban, Co-Chair of the Children and Recession Task Force, presented our findings to all the states with Speaker Chris Donovan.

Since the last legislative session, the signs that children need our help in weathering this recession continue to multiply. Just a few weeks ago, the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness issued a report which found that over the past year, 1,579 children slept in Connecticut emergency shelters. And that may be just the tip of the iceberg, since homeless shelters were operating over capacity throughout 2010 and much of 2009. That means the children in shelters may have been the lucky ones. As a sign of how deeply this recession has reached into the middle class, the Coalition also found that almost half of all families in shelters last year reported that this was their first experience with homelessness.

It isn't just shelters that are seeing new faces. When the Connecticut Association of Nonprofits surveyed its members, who provide a wide array of social services, 54 percent reported seeing consumers in 2010 that they had never seen before. Indeed, in the past year, the data has increasingly pointed to the suburbs as the new face of family poverty.

In October, the Brookings Institute issued an analysis of Census data showing the number of poor people in U.S. suburbs has jumped by 37.4 percent since 2000. That's faster than the national growth rate and more than doubles the urban rate. Suburbs are now home to roughly one-third of the nation's poor.

One of the mandates of the law last year was a look at an emergency fund for families. Our agency led this in partnership with the Liberty Bank Foundation. The findings point to the need for improved service delivery, more efficient mechanisms for case management as well as presumptive eligibility. We are not efficient or coordinated in our practices.

The following recommendations are offered to you for phase two of our children and recession statute. It adds to what we historically put in place to further mend our system of delivery while rapidly stopping children and families from falling into poverty for the long haul.

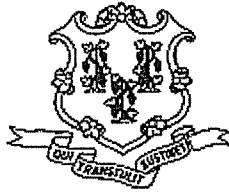
Suggestions include:

1. Create an open door policy for families in areas of employment, public health and child safety. Establish a timeline for a 'no wrong door' policy for the consumer seeking state or federal program or benefits provided through the departments of labor, public health and/or children and families.
2. Implement results based accountability for this act and for the children and recession act (PA 10-133) to determine outcomes.
3. Allow for cross-agency goal setting and share strategic planning in areas of crisis for children during this recession which include homelessness, hunger and youth unemployment. Permit pooled funding and blended funding to attain goals.
4. Create presumptive eligibility with a family entering Head Start or LIHEAP or SNAP, as the eligibility criteria is the same across all three. This simplifies access and public information.
5. Create presumptive eligibility for child care. Now a parent can lose up to two months of time, and therefore, can lose their newly acquired job, in paper work requests and turnarounds. If the goal of our state is jobs, we need to understand that parents cannot work without safe care for their children. Helping parents work and children thrive is our paramount task.
6. When unemployment is 8% or greater for three months, and a utility customer has been unemployed for at least four weeks, if he or she cannot pay the utility bill, and the utility company gets the payment through a public utility hearing, help forgive the bad credit rating and debt of the customer. If a company has been paid, why harm the customer's credit rating? These are hard times and the CT Energy Assistance Program helps with the payment. This stops long-term harm to a person's credit rating when the company has already received payment.
7. Link federal food programs to non profits for outreach and inform non profits that they can get half their costs reimbursed for outreach by federal funds. This is paramount given our record in food program utilization.

8. Ask the Department of Social Services to expand their linkages and portals for public access and information regarding federal food programs. They should also report on outcomes to committees of cognizance.
9. Allow a parent who is using state child care and has just lost his or her job, to hold on to child care for up to four months while they look for another job. If they lose their child care within four weeks, it is a guarantee that they will not be able to look rigorously for employment. Child care helps parents work and find employment.

Thank you for this review.

State of Connecticut
GENERAL ASSEMBLY



**1st Quarterly Report of
House Speaker Christopher Donovan's
Task Force on Children in the Recession**

Submitted January 2010

**Representatives Karen Jarmoc and Diana Urban
Task Force Co-chairs**



Download this report and other Task Force materials at: www.cga.ct.gov/coc/taskforce.htm

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Overview

On June 16, 2009, Speaker of the House Christopher Donovan announced that he was forming a legislative task force to find ways to help Connecticut's youngest citizen's deal with the impact of the current recession.

Connecticut thus became the first state in the nation to undertake such an effort. On the day the Speaker made his announcement, experts attending a forum organized by the Commission on Children provided estimates of just how badly the downturn will affect future generations:

- An additional 35,000 Connecticut children will fall into poverty during this recession.
- As adults, these children will earn an average of \$19,000 less annually than their Connecticut peers who avoided poverty.
- The economic cost to Connecticut from forgone earnings and poorer health of these children will run to \$800 million per year.
- The percentage of Connecticut residents living in poverty jumped by the largest margin of any state in the country between 2007 and 2008, according to the U.S. Census. The percentage of Connecticut children living in families with incomes under the federal poverty level rose from 11.1 percent in 2007 to 12.5 percent in 2008.

Representatives Karen Jarmoc and Diana Urban were named co-chairs of the Task Force, whose members included not only legislators but designees of Connecticut's congressional delegation and representatives of social-service agencies. The deliberative process began with national experts – including economists, other scholars, and foundation leaders – talking about the cost of recessions historically. By mid-December 2009, the Task Force had heard approximately 10 hours' worth of presentations and testimony, over three meetings and a public hearing, which was held in Hartford for residents of the 1st Congressional District. The Task Force intends to hold one hearing in each of the state's five districts.

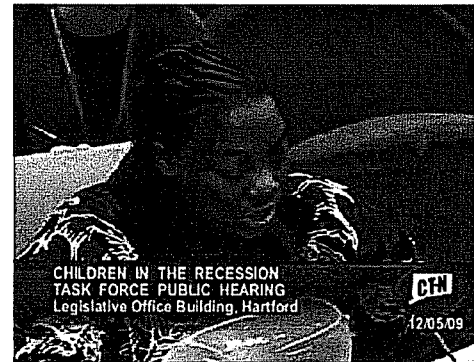
Below is a summary of what the Task Force has learned so far regarding the recession's impact on many aspects of children's lives, along with proposed policy approaches for addressing these problems.

"There is no greater risk to Connecticut's future than the adverse effects of this recession on our children.

The evidence suggests that children will feel the impact of the economic crisis far into the future. They are our future, and we must do everything we can to protect them from the ravages of the recession. From economic security to hunger, healthcare, family and parental support, child care, education and safety, our children are at risk and it is our responsibility to care for their needs." --Speaker Donovan

Hunger and Nutrition

- Nearly 11 percent of the households in Connecticut are “food insecure,” meaning the heads of these households are at high risk of being unable to feed themselves or their families. This year food pantries report a 30-50 percent increase in requests for assistance from 2008.
- The federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) has proven the most effective tool for ensuring that people don’t go hungry, yet an estimated 30 percent of the Connecticut families that are eligible do not participate.
- In the 3rd quarter of 2008, the 2-1-1 info-line received 6,000 calls regarding food and nutrition questions; at the end of the third quarter of 2009, about 9,000 calls were received.
- Half of all U.S. children will, at some point during their childhoods, live in households that use food stamps, according to a recent study conducted by Washington University in St. Louis and Cornell University in New York.
- Connecticut is losing \$9 million in federal funds because it doesn’t participate in certain child nutrition programs.



“I want to give you a picture of how this economy is knocking out an entire family – a very hard-working family. I have a mother who’s sick and a step-father who just lost his job ... In our refrigerator right now there are about two things: a half-bottle of juice and a box of eggs. The tension in our house is hard. I stay away as much as possible ... I have completed two programs in cooking, I have five different certifications. I’ve applied for five or six jobs a day, and I’ve gotten no interviews ... Sometimes I say to a friend, ‘OK, what can I do to get some quick money?’ I know the answer to the question, but I won’t go there. I don’t want to throw everything away, but I think about it – believe me, I do.”

- Latasha Fitzwilliams, 20, of Hartford, at the Task Force’s public hearing for residents of the 1st Congressional District, Dec. 5, 2009.

- Fully 75 percent of the children who eat free or reduced-price lunches at school do not receive meals from the summer feeding program, even though they’d qualify.
- Connecticut is last in the nation when it comes to school participation in the national School Breakfast Program, with only 39 percent of eligible children eating breakfast in school.

Possible solutions: Streamline the application process for federal nutrition programs; create more access to DSS regional offices; increase the efficiency of DSS in processing applications and providing services for SNAP; and do more and better outreach for SNAP and child nutrition programs, such as school meals, summer feeding, and after school snack, and WIC.

Key presentations: Lucy Nolan, executive director of End Hunger Connecticut, and Gloria McAdam, president and CEO of Foodshare.

Housing and Homelessness

- The extent of the housing crisis in Connecticut revealed itself on January 28, 2009, when communities across the state conducted their third-annual count of homeless people and found that 32 percent of the homeless families they encountered had jobs. It was also found that:
 1. Sixty percent of the adults in homeless families had 12th-grade educations or higher.
 2. Rural and suburban homelessness saw a dramatic increase from 2008, especially for families and children in families; both were up 33%.
 3. Homeless shelters throughout Connecticut are at or above capacity.
- Of Connecticut's 400,000 renting households, fully 100,000 earn less than 50% of the median income and spend more than half that income on housing, leaving little for food, clothing, transportation, and other necessities. These families are "this close" to homelessness.
- Children experiencing homelessness face great challenges. High mobility, precarious living conditions, and severe poverty combine to present significant educational barriers. They perform below their peers in math and reading and are more likely to be held back.
- For low-income families seeking to buy homes, the opportunities have withered. In 2000, 65.2% of Connecticut ownership units were valued at less than \$200,000; by 2008, the percentage had fallen to 19.8%.
- The state has built virtually no affordable housing in the last decade; it ranks 47th in units built per capita since 2000. Worse, 4,500 of the existing affordable rental units could revert to market-rate prices unless preserved in the next six years.

Possible solutions: Preserve the remaining housing available to low-income families; create more safe and affordable housing in communities across Connecticut; increase homelessness-prevention programs; and secure full implementation of the federal McKinney-Vento Act to ensure homeless children and youth receive education.

Key presentations: David Fink, policy and communications director, Partnership for Strong Communities; Carol Walter, executive director, Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness.

Employment—and Unemployment

- Connecticut's unemployment rate stood at 8.4% by November 2009, with 91,000 workers filing for UI benefits weekly.
- Just under half of unemployed workers receive unemployment insurance benefits, but in Connecticut that money doesn't go nearly as far as it does in other states. Connecticut's replacement rate, or the percentage of the worker's former wages replaced by UI, is only 29.9%. The U.S. average is 34.9%.
- The impression that Connecticut is a high-wage state can be misleading, because Connecticut is also a high-cost state.
- Joblessness for 16-to-24-year-old black men has reached "Great Depression proportions" according to the Washington Post. Nationally, it was 34.5 percent in October—more than three times the rate for the general U.S. population.

Possible solutions: The "Two Generation Now" approach, which promotes the economic well-being of parents while simultaneously ensuring that young children are healthy, safe, and succeeding in school. It does this by supporting programs that help low-income adults get and hold jobs and access available public benefits.

Also, the state could avail itself of the TANF (Temporary Aid to Needy Families) Emergency Contingency Fund – a \$5 billion fund created by the federal government to provide additional fiscal relief to the states. The fund is meant to provide basic assistance, non-recurring short-term benefits, and subsidized employment, providing states with a 4:1 match based on increased spending over the 2007-2008 fiscal years. Connecticut is eligible for up to \$133 million.

Key presenters: Jamey Bell, Connecticut Voices for Children; John Padilla, Annie E. Casey Foundation; Jane McNichol, Legal Assistance Resource Center of Connecticut; and George Wentworth, National Employment Law Project.



"I come from a middle-class family ... We bought a house before the recession started, and both of my parents had jobs. My mom lost her job almost three months ago ... Now my main concern – instead of school and extracurricular activities and finding ways to get scholarships to go to college – is finding a job. I've applied for jobs, but there aren't any for students after school ... I'm worried that one day I'll come home and my dad won't have a job either. It's just difficult, because high school students shouldn't have to deal with supporting their families."

- Glastonbury High School junior Kara Googins, at the Task Force's public hearing in the 1st Congressional District, Dec. 5, 2009.

Early Care and Education

- Early care and education should take a two-generational approach, since it allows parents to work and provides their children with consistent, safe, and enriched learning experiences.
- Families earning low wages cannot afford to work if they lack access to affordable child care. Families who cannot work fall deeper into poverty, and the children don't receive the early education they need to succeed later in school.
- Decades of research shows that children receiving consistent, high-quality early care and education enter school ready to learn, succeed, and when reaching adulthood are productive working members of society. Early childhood programs can yield returns of \$18 for each dollar invested.
- The cost of child care in Connecticut is either the first or second most expensive part of the family budget, depending upon where a family lives. Low-income children can enroll in a variety of federal and state-funded early care and education programs. The Care 4 Kids child care subsidy program provides parents with the financial means, through vouchers, to enroll their children in early-care programs.
- Due to the budget deficit, the state closed the Care 4 Kids program to new, non-TANF applicants in Summer 2009. Then it reopened the program in Fall 2009. Now it anticipates closing again in early 2010. This practice has caused turmoil for families and providers alike.

Possible Solutions: Keep enrollment to the Care 4 Kids program open, to enable low-income parents to continue working or secure new employment. If the program absolutely must be closed, provide 60 days' notice to parents and providers. Maintain funding for: state-funded centers, state-funded Head Start, School Readiness, and Family Resource Centers.

Key presenter: Maggie Adair, Connecticut Association for Human Services

Higher Education

- Enrollment in Connecticut's public colleges and universities is at an all-time high, due in large part to unemployed or underemployed workers seeking graduate degrees in hopes of making themselves more employable, the high quality of education offered, and the affordability compared to private schools.
- Students transferring from Connecticut community colleges continues to increase, up 51 percent since 2001. At seven of the 12 Connecticut Community Colleges in 2009, the number of students who transferred to the Connecticut State University System (CSUY) matched or surpassed previous record levels.
- More than 1,000 students transferred from out-of-state colleges and universities to CSUS universities in Fall 2009, and four out of five, about 83 percent, were Connecticut residents. That's up from 76 percent last year.
- Financial aid is also at an all-time high, though it is not enough to meet the need.
- Ninety-three percent of the students in the state university system come from Connecticut, and 86 percent of the graduates remain here.
- Parents of high school children say the recession has put a significant dent in what they can contribute toward college tuition. Fidelity Investments, in its third-annual College Savings Indicator study, found that parents can cover only 11 percent of the total cost of their children's college education. That's down from 15 percent in 2008.
- A large percentage of Connecticut's future workforce must come from urban areas, yet only 20 percent of the students currently in those areas will get college degrees.



"Along with being a student, I have four jobs on campus. Most of the students at my school work at least two jobs to help pay their way through college. I have friends who've taken semesters off to go back home to help their families ... It does affect our grades ... Are we really going to be the driving force [in this country] if, by the time we graduate, we're already tired of working?"

- Bualong Ramize, Wesleyan University student, at the Task Force's public hearing in the 1st Congressional District, Dec. 5, 2009.

Possible solutions: Continue the governor's policy of using state bonding for undergraduate and graduate students to receive student loans at reasonable interest rates through credit unions. In the meantime, community colleges are looking for creative ways to save students money, such as reusing more books, creating payment plans and partnerships, and providing manufacturing scholarships. (Key presenters: Chancellor David Carter, Connecticut State University System; President Martha McLeod, Asnuntuck Community College.)

Family Health Care

- Nationally, at least 121,000 children have lost health insurance coverage as a result of parents losing their jobs in the recession, according to Congress' Joint Economic Committee.
- In its 2008 American Community Survey, the U.S. Census Bureau found that 9 percent of all Connecticut residents – or about 310,600 of them – were going without health insurance. An estimated 4.9 percent of children under the age of 18 (or 39,578) were uninsured.
- The 2008 survey was the first in which the Census Bureau prepared city-level estimates for health insurance coverage in Connecticut. The estimates of the total uninsured ranged from 11.8 percent in Waterbury to approximately 20 percent in Stamford, Bridgeport, and Danbury. Estimates for uninsured children ranged from 3.5 percent in New Haven to 13.4 percent in Danbury.
- From 2006 to 2008, Connecticut averaged 255 infant deaths per year, according to the state Department of Public Health. Of those, three-quarters occurred before the 28th day of life, and half of those were linked to low birth weight, which is strongly connected to poverty. Infant mortality tends to be a lagging indicator in recessions, so the state may see an increase this year.
- New polling data from the University of Michigan Health System shows that as parents face increasingly difficult financial decisions in this recession, it's often their children's health that gets short shrift -- especially in uninsured and lower-income families.

Possible solutions: The Department of Public Health has compiled a report on plans to counteract low birth weight and solve the disparities in prenatal care. Recommendations include: a) maximize co-enrollment in Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and Medicaid for all eligible women; b) expand tobacco cessation programs targeted at pregnant women; c) promote use of the Centering Pregnancy model of prenatal care. These programs may be paid for through the state tobacco funds and the TANF Emergency Funds.

Key presenters: Dr. Carol Stone, Family Health Section, Department of Public Health.

Family and Community Violence

- Nationally, we are seeing an increase in family violence, especially in areas such as neglect, because families are unable to provide basic needs to children. There is also the possibility for the recession to result in increased fatalities of children.
- The recession will cause children to suffer more family violence. It is a stressor for struggling parents already involved in abusive relationships with family members.
- A study from Liz Claiborne and The Family Violence Prevention Fund shows an increase in teen dating violence -- directly tied to the economic downturn. The study says nearly one in three teens reports being the victim of verbal, physical or sexual abuse. Nearly one in four says they've been harassed by e-mail or text messaging. Nearly half of the respondents report being controlled, threatened or pressured to do things against their will.

Possible solutions: Family violence results in long-term negative impacts on the family. Dealing with the trauma immediately when it happens can help negate the long-term effects on children. Early intervention is critical. Everyone who works around children, such as teachers and child-care workers, needs training on how to recognize abuse and how to respond to it. As animal abuse is often a predictor of family abuse, cross-report information between animal-control officers and child-welfare investigators.

Key presentations: Jeanne Milstein, Connecticut Child Advocate; Erika Tindill, executive director, Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

Teens and After-School Programs

- Youth unemployment is at its highest level since World War II.
- The New York Times reports that over the past two years, "government officials and experts have seen an increasing number of children leave home for life on the streets, including many under 13." These teenagers, having seen their families suffer foreclosures, layoffs, and other economic calamities, often believe they're doing their families a favor by leaving.
- After-school programs across the nation are struggling with both recession-related budget shortfalls and recession-related enrollment increases. A national survey last spring revealed that three in five programs have seen their funding drop in the past two years. Meanwhile, demand for the programs keeps rising -- in part because of the recession, as laid-off parents seek help in providing for their children.

- Capital Workforce Partners reports that summer youth employment programs in Connecticut helped put 4,000 youths to work this summer, but an additional 7,000 applicants had to be turned away for lack of funds
- Connecticut's workers already are the eighth-oldest in the nation, and a major "brain drain" – caused by youth leaving the state for better employment opportunities – is making the problem worse.

Possible solutions: Create more opportunities in service and after-school programs to keep youth safe and engaged; give youth more opportunities in civic leadership; continue to build youth employment; and expand summer youth work opportunities, using TANF emergency funds.

Key presenters: Thomas L. Phillips, Capital Workforce Partners, and Gwendolyn L. Busch, Youth@Work.

Coordination and Systems

- Connecticut parents in need of unemployment benefits, food stamps, and other recession-related services have suffered unnecessary delays, frustration, and embarrassment because of state requirements that they apply for each service separately.
- Families seeking food assistance have had trouble reaching intake staff or have been told to return the next day due to high demand and a shortage of caseworkers.
- Some DSS intake workers have as many as 2,000 cases.
- In the case of child care, parents who applied for the service have been told within weeks that they'd have to reapply because the state had closed and restarted the service.
- Many other states have avoided this – and saved money in the process – by consolidating their applications for various services, often by relying on new technologies.

Possible solutions: Train social-service employees to handle client intake across agency lines; utilize technology to make it easier for people to determine whether they're eligible for programs; create a master contract or coordinated leadership team across agencies and branches of government to address the specific and discrete needs of families in the recession and systemic coordination, as we did following the 9/11 attacks.

DISCLAIMER: This report relies on the data publicly available at the time of publication. The Task Force understands that the data is subject to change.

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Representative Diana Urban, co-chair

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Senator Edith Prague
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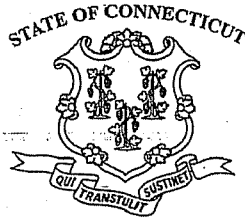
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Substitute House Bill No. 5360

Public Act No. 10-133

AN ACT CONCERNING CHILDREN IN THE RECESSION.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) The Child Poverty and Prevention Council, established pursuant to section 4-67x of the general statutes, shall constitute the children in the recession leadership team to make recommendations for the state's emergency response to children affected by the recession. The council may establish a subcommittee to act for it under this section. For purposes of this section, the council or a subcommittee established under this subsection shall meet quarterly if the unemployment rate of the state, as reported by the Labor Commissioner, is eight per cent or greater for the preceding three months.

(b) The council shall work in consultation with other government agencies to develop and promote policies, practices and procedures, within available appropriations, that (1) mitigate the long-term impact of economic recessions on children; (2) provide appropriate assistance and resources to families to minimize the number of children who enter poverty as a result of the recession; and (3) reduce human and fiscal costs of recessions, including foreclosures, child hunger, family violence, school failure, youth runaways, homelessness, child abuse and neglect.

Substitute House Bill No. 5360

(c) For purposes of this section, the council, within available appropriations, shall utilize strategies to mitigate the impact of the recession on children that include, but are not limited to, the following: (1) Resource information sharing and strategic planning to address emergency response to children in the recession; (2) training of pertinent personnel on the availability of services, access points and interventions across agencies, including child trauma treatment; (3) development of linkages between job training and education programs and services; (4) development and implementation of efforts to coordinate outreach and improve access to services, including the establishment of multiple enrollment sites where feasible; (5) reduction of current response times to clients for safety net programs, including, but not limited to, the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, the federal Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children, the National School Lunch Program and other federal child nutrition programs, the temporary family assistance program, the child care subsidy program, heating and rental assistance, eviction prevention services and free and reduced preschool meal programs; (6) identification of appropriate revisions to regulations and procedures to be streamlined to increase program access; (7) maximization of availability of targeted case management and intervention services; (8) assessment of the unique needs of children of soldiers serving or returning from war or other military service; and (9) maximization of all federal funding opportunities.

(d) Not later than January 1, 2011, the council shall prepare a report on (1) the progress in implementing the provisions of this section; and (2) other government actions taken to reduce the impact of the recession on children and families. Such report shall be submitted to the select committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to children and to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to appropriations and the budgets of state agencies and human services.

Substitute House Bill No. 5360

Sec. 2. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) The Department of Social Services, in consultation with the Labor Department and the Departments of Education, Public Health and Children and Families, shall seek, within available appropriations, to promote efficiency, reduce costs and administrative error rates and simplify the application process for families eligible for benefits by streamlining and integrating public information and access to programs.

(b) For the purpose of subsection (a) of this section, the Department of Social Services shall develop, within available appropriations, a plan for a comprehensive state service approach that may include (1) the development and promotion of a single, simplified, on-line application and enrollment process for programs administered by the Department of Social Services that serve children or families; (2) the use of the Internet to develop and increase public access to on-line screening tools, benefit calculators and on-line applications that facilitate prompt access to programs administered by the Department of Social Services and benefit information; and (3) the promotion of access to direct assistance with application and enrollment processes through community-based organizations. Not later than January 31, 2011, the department shall submit the plan to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to human services and to the select committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to children. The department may consult with and accept donations from philanthropic organizations to accomplish the purposes of this section.

(c) The Department of Social Services shall develop, in accordance with the provisions of federal law, a client-friendly application process which shall not require applications to be resubmitted if a family applied for services and, not more than thirty days after the date the application was submitted, the family experienced a change in circumstances or the program closed to intake applications and then

Substitute House Bill No. 5360

reopened.

Sec. 3. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) The Department of Social Services shall provide timely public notice if, for any reason, the child care subsidy program closes intake. The department shall notify the public if the program eligibility or status has been altered. Any change in eligibility or program terms, except opening of the program or expansion in eligibility, shall be effective not less than thirty days after public notice of such change.

Sec. 4. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) The Department of Social Services, in consultation with appropriate state agencies and within available appropriations, shall (1) allocate existing funding and resources to ensure the availability of homeless shelters that accept intact families or that assist families to find adequate alternative arrangements that allow the family to remain together; (2) review program eligibility requirements and other policies to ensure that unaccompanied homeless children have access, to the fullest extent practicable, to critical services that such children might otherwise have been prevented from receiving due to age or guardianship requirements; and (3) work, in accordance with state and federal law, to seek relief from income garnishment orders through the appropriate judicial authority if it is deemed appropriate to be in the best interests of children and families.

(b) The Department of Education, in consultation with appropriate departments, shall seek full utilization of the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act to protect children falling into homelessness from school failure and dropping out of school and to improve access to higher education.

Sec. 5. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) The Departments of Social Services, Public Health and Education shall collaborate to decrease hunger resulting from the recession by coordinating, within available

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appropriations, state-wide public access, information and outreach, and promoting, within available appropriations, cross-referral and collocation of entry points and application processes for the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, child nutrition programs and the federal Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children and increase federal reimbursements.

Sec. 6. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2010*) (a) The Department of Education shall administer, within available appropriations, a child nutrition outreach program to increase (1) participation in the federal School Breakfast Program, federal Summer Food Service Program and federal Child and Adult Care Food Program; and (2) federal reimbursement for such programs.

(b) The child nutrition outreach program shall:

(1) Encourage schools to (A) participate in the federal School Breakfast Program; (B) employ innovative breakfast service methods where students eat their breakfast in their classrooms or elsewhere after school starts, rather than only before school and only in the cafeteria; and (C) apply to the in-classroom breakfast grant program pursuant to section 10-215g of the general statutes;

(2) (A) Encourage local and regional school districts to sponsor Summer Food Service Program sites; (B) recruit other sponsors of such sites; and (C) make grants to site sponsors to assist them in increasing child participation;

(3) Encourage day care centers to participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program; and

(4) Publicize the availability of federally-funded child nutrition programs throughout the state.

Sec. 7. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) The Department of Social

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Services shall maximize federal fund opportunities from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Emergency Fund established pursuant to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, P.L. 111-5, in order to assist families facing unemployment, housing crises, increasing debt, homelessness or other hardships. The department shall seek to utilize, in accordance with the provisions of federal law:

(1) The nonrecurrent, short-term benefits category of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Emergency Fund for eligible purposes, including, but not limited to, housing, transportation, work expenses, family safety, low birth weight reduction, food and nutrition. The benefits funded pursuant to this subdivision may include, but not be limited to, mortgage assistance, eviction relief, car repair, work clothes, domestic violence services, home visitation and on-the-job training; and

(2) The subsidized employment category of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Emergency Fund for eligible purposes, including, but not limited to, youth employment programs and the alleviation of specific labor shortages and state worker shortages where the jobs created help families apply for state services.

(b) The department shall work with the private sector, including philanthropic, business and nonprofit agencies as well as any consortium of such groups, for eligible purposes and as third-party participants to qualify for, access and maximize federal funding from said emergency fund through donation, in-kind spending and training of subsidized workers.

(c) The department shall implement the provisions of this section within available resources.

Sec. 8. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) Not more than sixty days after

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the effective date of this section, the Department of Social Services, within available appropriations and to the extent permitted by federal law, shall establish and implement a procedure for the following modification in the temporary assistance of needy families program whenever the state unemployment rate, as reported by the Labor Commissioner, is eight per cent or greater for the preceding three months. The Jobs First program shall permit and encourage parents to pursue education and training and shall approve, as work activities, two- and four-year degree programs. A recipient shall be eligible for assistance under this modification for at least six months even if the state unemployment rate for subsequent quarters is not eight per cent or greater. The department may seek federal support to pay for such modifications through funds provided from the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Emergency Fund.

Sec. 9. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) The Department of Public Health, within available appropriations and in consultation with the Departments of Social Services and Education, shall seek to reduce the incidence of low birth weight among infants and reduce the cost to the state from unnecessary hospitalizations of such infants by (1) maximizing coenrollment in the federal Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children and Medicaid for all eligible women; (2) encouraging tobacco cessation programs targeted to pregnant women; and (3) promoting the use of the centering pregnancy model of prenatal care. The department may recover the costs of implementing the provisions of this section through funds available from the Tobacco and Health Trust Fund established under section 4-28f of the general statutes and the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Emergency Fund.

Sec. 10. (*Effective from passage*) The Commission on Children, in consultation with the private sector, shall research the viability of enacting a state children and the recession fund that would provide

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funds and low-interest loans to families facing short-term crisis in housing, utilities, hunger and unemployment. Not later than January 1, 2011, the commission shall report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, its findings to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to appropriations and the budgets of state agencies.

Sec. 11. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) The Commission on Children shall coordinate information on youth leadership opportunities that keep youth engaged in the community. The commission shall inform the General Assembly and the public of such opportunities.

Sec. 12. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) No cause of action or liability shall arise against the state, any of its agencies or subdivisions, or any state official, employee or agent, for failure to comply with the provisions of sections 1 to 9, inclusive, of this act.

Sec. 13. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) The Department of Social Services shall submit a report on the policies and interventions promoted pursuant to sections 2 and 3 of this act, subsection (a) of section 4 of this act and sections 7 and 8 of this act. The report shall include key outcome indicators and measures and set benchmarks for evaluating progress in accomplishing the purposes of said sections. The department shall submit the report on or before January 1, 2011, to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to appropriations and the budgets of state agencies, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes.

(b) The Department of Education shall submit a report on the policies and interventions promoted pursuant to subsection (b) of section 4 and section 6 of this act. The report shall include key outcome indicators and measures and set benchmarks for evaluating progress in accomplishing the purposes of said sections. The department shall

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submit the report on or before January 1, 2011, to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to appropriations and the budgets of state agencies, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes.

(c) The Department of Public Health shall submit a report on the policies and interventions promoted pursuant to section 9 of this act. The report shall include key outcome indicators and measures and set benchmarks for evaluating progress in accomplishing the purposes of said section. The department shall submit the report on or before January 1, 2011, to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to appropriations and the budgets of state agencies, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes.

Approved June 8, 2010

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